



New Internationalist

The people, the ideas, the action in the fight for global justice

Languages

NEW INTERNATIONALIST EASIER ENGLISH
ELEMENTARY READY LESSON

This lesson:

Grammar 1: word order in questions

Speaking 1: discuss languages

Reading 1: find the numbers

Speaking 2: top languages

Grammar 2: comparing

Reading 2: find the answers

Speaking 3: discuss languages

Homework: quiz or reading

Order this question:

many languages

world? in

there are

How the

Order these 2 questions:

speakers?

languages

most

have

the

Which

the

have

Which

countries

languages?

most

3 questions:

1/ How many languages are there in the world?

2/ Which languages have the most speakers?

3/ Which countries have the most languages?

Discuss:

what do you think?



Fill the gaps with a number:

200 2 2030 1 200 5 – 7,000

People speak a)..... languages in the world now. But one language dies every b)..... weeks. Linguists think that, in c)..... years, there will only be about d)..... languages. And in e)....., maybe we will all speak f)..... language.

Check: http://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Languages_big_and_small_-_the_facts

Which are the top ten languages in the world? (1st and 2nd language speakers)

Korean

Turkish

Spanish

German

Urdu

English

Chinese (Mandarin)

Russian

Portuguese

Bengali

Tamil

French

Japanese

Hindi

Vietnamese

Chinese (Wu)

Grammar: comparing

I think **more** people speak English **than** Russian.

I think **less** people speak French **than** Chinese.

Write 6 more sentences like this in pairs:

I think **more** people speak **than**

I think **less** people speak **than**

I think is the top language.

How many languages are there in these countries? Match:

1/ USA

2/ Papua New Guinea

3/ Brazil

4/ China

5/ England

6/ Nigeria

a) Less than 5

b) More than 800

c) About 500

d) About 200

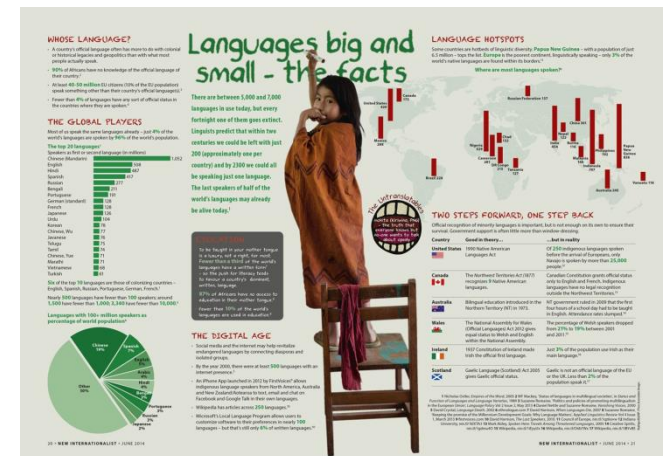
e) About 400

f) About 300

Now find the answers:

- # 1. Which are the top ten languages?
- # 2. Which countries have the most languages?

Look at this link:



http://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Languages_big_and_small_-_the_facts

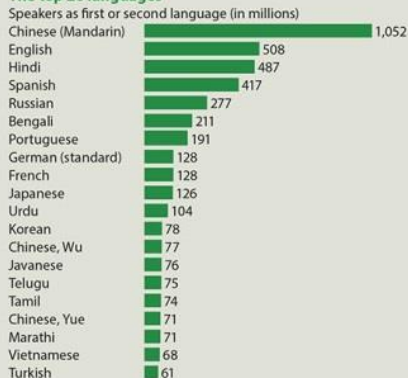
WHOSE LANGUAGE?

- A country's official language often has more to do with colonial or historical legacies and geopolitics than with what most people actually speak.
- 90% of Africans have no knowledge of the official language of their country.²
- At least 40-50 million EU citizens (10% of the EU population) speak something other than their country's official language(s).³
- Fewer than 4% of languages have any sort of official status in the countries where they are spoken.⁴

THE GLOBAL PLAYERS

Most of us speak the same languages already – just 4% of the world's languages are spoken by 96% of the world's population.

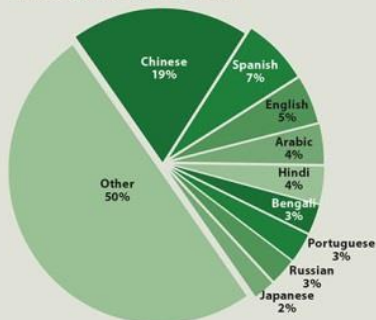
The top 20 languages¹



Six of the top 10 languages are those of colonizing countries – English, Spanish, Russian, Portuguese, German, French.¹

Nearly 500 languages have fewer than 100 speakers; around 1,500 have fewer than 1,000; 3,340 have fewer than 10,000.⁵

Languages with 100+ million speakers as percentage of world population⁶



Languages big and small - the facts

There are between 5,000 and 7,000 languages in use today, but every fortnight one of them goes extinct.

Linguists predict that within two centuries we could be left with just 200 (approximately one per country) and by 2300 we could all be speaking just one language. The last speakers of half of the world's languages may already be alive today.¹

EDUCATION

To be taught in your mother tongue is a luxury, not a right, for most. Fewer than a third of the world's languages have a written form⁷ – so the push for literacy tends to favour a country's dominant, written, language.

87% of Africans have no access to education in their mother tongue.⁸

Fewer than 10% of the world's languages are used in education.⁹

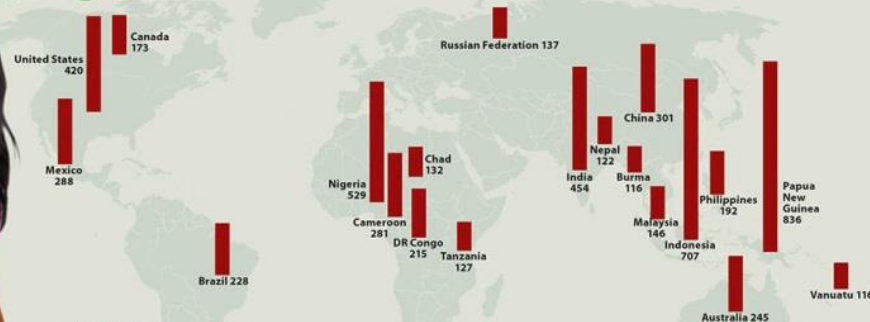
THE DIGITAL AGE

- Social media and the internet may help revitalize endangered languages by connecting diasporas and isolated groups.
- By the year 2000, there were at least 500 languages with an internet presence.⁵
- An iPhone App launched in 2012 by FirstVoices⁹ allows indigenous language speakers from North America, Australia and New Zealand/Aotearoa to text, email and chat on Facebook and Google Talk in their own languages.
- Wikipedia has articles across 250 languages.¹⁰
- Microsoft's Local Language Program allows users to customize software to their preferences in nearly 100 languages – but that's still only 6% of written languages.¹⁰

LANGUAGE HOTSPOTS

Some countries are hotbeds of linguistic diversity. Papua New Guinea – with a population of just 6.5 million – tops the list. Europe is the poorest continent, linguistically speaking – only 3% of the world's native languages are found within its borders.¹¹

Where are most languages spoken?⁶



TWO STEPS FORWARD, ONE STEP BACK

Official recognition of minority languages is important, but is not enough on its own to ensure their survival. Government support is often little more than window-dressing.

Country	Good in theory...	...but in reality
United States	1990 Native American Languages Act	Of 250 indigenous languages spoken before the arrival of Europeans, only Navajo is spoken by more than 25,000 people. ¹²
Canada	The Northwest Territories Act (1877) recognizes 9 Native American languages.	Canadian Constitution grants official status only to English and French. Indigenous languages have no legal recognition outside the Northwest Territories. ¹³
Australia	Bilingual education introduced in the Northern Territory (NT) in 1973.	NT government ruled in 2009 that the first four hours of a school day had to be taught in English. Attendance rates slumped. ¹⁴
Wales	The National Assembly for Wales (Official Languages) Act 2012 gives equal status to Welsh and English within the National Assembly.	The percentage of Welsh speakers dropped from 21% to 19% between 2001 and 2011. ¹⁵
Ireland	1937 Constitution of Ireland made Irish the official first language.	Just 3% of the population use Irish as their main language. ¹⁶
Scotland	Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 gives Gaelic official status.	Gaelic is not an official language of the EU or the UK. Less than 2% of the population speak it. ¹⁷

¹ Nicholas Ostler, *Empires of the Word*, 2005 ² WF Mackey, 'Status of languages in multilingual societies', in *Status and Function of Languages and Language Varieties*, 1989 ³ Suzanne Romaine, 'Politics and policies of promoting multilingualism in the European Union', *Language Policy* Vol 2 Issue 2, May 2013 ⁴ Daniel Nettle and Suzanne Romaine, *Vanishing Voices*, 2000 ⁵ David Crystal, *Language Death*, 2002 ⁶ ethnologue.com ⁷ David Harrison, *When Languages Die*, 2007 ⁸ Suzanne Romaine, 'Keeping the promise of the Millennium Development Goals: Why Language Matters', *Applied Linguistics Review* Vol 4 Issue 1, March 2013 ⁹ firstvoices.com ¹⁰ David Harrison, *The Last Speakers*, 2010 ¹¹ Council of Europe, nln.tl/1qz6vow ¹² Indiana University, nln.tl/1kIXTA3 ¹³ Mark Abley, *Spoken Here: Travels Among Threatened Languages*, 2005 ¹⁴ Creative Spirits, nln.tl/1gdmu40 ¹⁵ Wikipedia, nln.tl/1EyyUx ¹⁶ Wikipedia, nln.tl/06b7Wx ¹⁷ Wikipedia, nln.tl/1IBYVBE

Discuss:

**1/ Is it important to stop languages dying?
Why?**

2/ How easy is it to learn your language?

**3/ Teach some words from your language
to other people.**

**4/ What can we do to keep all the
languages in the world?**

Homework – find out more:

1) do this quiz:

[http://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/How much do you know about languages%3F](http://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/How_much_do_you_know_about_languages%3F) - Try this quiz

2) read this in Easy English:

[http://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Languages - a revolution](http://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Languages_-_a_revolution)

